



# JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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## Eighteenth-Century Dinner for George Sherburn

On Thursday evening, Dec. 29th, at the Men's Faculty Club of Columbia University, there gathered 96 people to do honor to George Sherburn and 18th-century English literature. It was a gala occasion, as all who could attend will undoubtedly bear witness. For those who could not be there some brief report may be welcome.

Joseph Wood Krutch was Master-of-Ceremonies, interspersing his introductions of the speakers with amusing and pertinent anecdotes (as every toastmaster should). Napier Wilt talked entertainingly about Sherburn's personality. What we remember best is the perfect characterization of his letters — each so filled with witty comments one would like to pass it around but can't because of some neat jibe at oneself. Louis I. Fredvold followed with reminiscences of their early friendship and of the pioneer work of Sherburn in preparing the way for a complete reinterpretation of Pope. In conclusion Louis A. Landa presented to the guest of honor a handsome leather-bound copy of *Pope and His Contemporaries*, just received from the Clarendon Press in Oxford, which Sherburn modestly and gracefully accepted.

If you were asked to pick one passage from Pope's works which best suits George Sherburn, what would you choose? Read lines 631-42 in Part III of *An Essay on Criticism* and you will see what actually appeared on the printed menu program card.

Messages of congratulation were read from scholars in England and this country who were unable to attend. One in particular deserves to be quoted in full. Joseph Wood Krutch read as follows: "I have an odd communication which reached the earth by spiritual telegraph and was relayed to me by Western Union. It is signed "A and P," but I think that is a mistake. I presume there are no grocery stores in the Elysian Fields, and I imagine that the signature ought to be simply "A.P." I do notice a

phenomenon which seems to be characteristic of all the spirit communications from great writers — the fact, I mean, that long residence in the Beyond seems to affect adversely their literary style. Whether that is due to the fact that they have to sing hymns all day I don't know; but in any event here is the communication. It is headed:

#### EPISTLE TO DR. SHERBURN

Since first I lisped in numbers 'twas my fate,  
To speak less freely of my love than hate;  
And more occasions too for that I found,  
Since knaves and fools it is that most abound.  
'Till now I ne'er regretted that my bent  
Was more for insult than for compliment.  
But when I search my works to find a phrase  
Which might be turned to make its glowing praise  
Fit tribute to your honor'd guest to-night  
There's none I find that seems, somehow, quite right.  
Let's try a few and then I think you'll see  
The sort of thing that's just been troubling me.

'How happy is the blameless scholar's lot:  
'The world forgetting — by the world forgot'?  
But that, of course, is what G.S. is not!  
'Blessed with each talent and each art to please  
'And born to write, converse, and live with ease.'  
That fits; but never were *his* praises 'faint;'  
And 'willing to wound's' precisely what he aint.  
'Let Sporus tremble' — worse and worse and worse,  
There must be *somewhere* an obliging verse.

To Boyle 'tis true I gave a well-turned blurb,  
But to no Sitwell 'tis we owe our Sherb.  
From such as she as from some piddling Theobald  
'Twas only fancies dripped and notions dribbled,  
'Till tired at last of 'Lives' so inexact,  
God said, 'Let Sherburn be!' and all was fact.

With bards triumphant born in happier days,  
I share at last the everlasting bays.  
One thing alone there lacks to make my bliss  
And this, I hope, you will not take amiss:  
My early Life's beyond the reach of fate,  
Pray tell me sir, *when* will you do my Late?"



## Miscellaneous News Items

Work continues apace in cataloguing and re-arranging the great mass of Boswell manuscripts now in the Yale Library, the cataloguing being chiefly in the hands of Mrs. Frederick Pottle. A description of the work of this "husband and wife team" appeared in the *New York Times* for Jan. 9. As Fritz Liebert writes, "Bringing the various parts of the collection together has enabled her to identify many pieces and reunite many strays."

On January 13 at the Univ. of Rochester George Sherburn and Maynard Mack appeared as part of a panel discussion of the poetry of Pope. The next week Sherburn lectured at the Univ. of Colorado on "Is Poetry an Intellectual Art?"

Frances S. Fink (104 Clark Rd., Brookline 46, Mass) reports her progress in compiling a check-list of 18th-century portraits with literary associations in American collections. So far, she writes, she has about 100 items from many places, not all important, including oils, engravings and miniatures; from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Spotswood Collection in Richmond, Va., the Frick and Plimpton Collections in New York. They range in sitters from Boswell to Walsh, in artists from Cosway to Romney, and in geographic distribution from Boston to Minneapolis. We urge readers who know of individual portraits or special collections to write at once to Mrs. Fink.

H. H. Scudder (New Hampshire) has acquired a copy of the 1798 edition of the Johnson-Piozzi correspondence, which belonged to Henry Ward Beecher and bears his bookplate. Amusingly enough, the leaves have never been cut.

## Book Notes

Percy Scholes writes from Switzerland that he is just finishing his life of Sir John Hawkins, Johnson's friend and executor. If he can do half as much for Hawkins as he did for his musical rival Dr. Burney, we are in for a treat. As previously announced, Scholes is also preparing an edition of Dr. Burney's two tours in Italy and Germany, which will include large portions previously omitted.

Mary Alden Hopkins, recent biographer of Hannah More, is putting the finishing touches on *Dr. Johnson's Lichfield*, a study of the literary and social life in the city of Johnson's birth.

Announced for publication in the near future is Francesco Cordasco's *A Register of 18th century Bibliographies and References* (a quarter-century survey relating to English literature, periodicals, printing, aesthetics, art, music, history, science, etc. — in all over 600 items).

Also announced as ready soon is Vol. III of *The Percy Letters* — this time the correspondence of Thomas Percy and Thomas Warton, edited by Leah Dennis and M. G. Robinson.

The large Lovelace collection of Locke's papers, now in the Bodleian Library, has been made use of by J. W. Gough for his forthcoming book, *John Locke's Political Philosophy*.

### Characters' Names in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding

We have been gently chided by John Butt (Newcastle) for our failure to do more than mention the article on "The Naming of Characters in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding" in the last number of *RES*. And we agree that it is of unusual merit, that it breaks new ground in some points. And we should have recommended it more highly in December. So to make up for that lapse we urge you strongly now to read it carefully and write in any objections or comments you may have. If you can't quite follow Watt in his suggestion about the name Harlowe, let us hear from you. Certainly this is just the sort of an essay to start long and fruitful controversies.

### "A Love Song. In the Modern Taste"

Because it was included in the 1735 Faulkner edition, "A Love Song. In the Modern Taste" has usually been admitted to the Swift canon. Now Maurice Johnson (Syracuse) sends in certain evidence which might suggest Pope's hand in the composition. Johnson writes: "I do not believe anyone has noted that certain lines in this poem reflect lines in Pope's earlier *Rape of the Lock*. For example, from the *Rape*:

Thus on Maeander's flowery margin lies  
Th' expiring Swan, and as he sings he dies. (V, 65-66)

From "A Love Song:"

Melancholy smooth Meander,  
Swiftly purling in a Round,



On thy Margin Lovers wander,  
 With thy flow'ry Chaplets crown'd.

Thus when *Philomela* drooping,  
 Softly seeks her silent Mate;  
 See the Bird of *Juno* stooping.  
 Melody resigns to Fate.

(25-32)

This is the sort of self-parody Pope sometimes liked. Or perhaps both are merely translations or adaptations from Ovid, to whom Tillotson refers in his note on the above lines from *The Rape*." Do any of you have other suggestions or interpretations? Could it be that Swift is slyly poking fun at a specific passage in the work of his friend?

### News from Abroad

It is with deep regret that we announce the recent death of Norman Ault, the Stormy Petrel of Pope scholarship. His stimulating conjectures, stemming from his vast knowledge of the period, will be greatly missed.

From Jim Osborn comes news also of the death of Albert Bernard Burney of Tunbridge Wells. A retired stock broker, he was a prominent alumnus of Merton College, Oxford, and a regular benefactor of the College. With the encouragement of D. Nichol Smith he formed an excellent collection of Johnsonian books and manuscripts, including a large interleaved copy of Boswell's *Life*. Among other gifts to Merton College, he presented the library with a set of the Malahide Boswell Papers, given in honor of Nichol Smith's tenure as Merton Professor of English Literature.

From Bertram B. Davis (71 Bishop Rd., Bristol 7) comes a little essay on Sir William Jones, published expressly for the British Council as one of the attractively produced series of booklets designed to introduce the British way of life and culture to the foreigner. Davis comments: "It seems to me an interesting and important item for students of Johnson, since so very little has been published upon Jones since Lord Teignmouth's biography in 1807, and that little extremely hard to come by. The neglect is difficult to understand. The essay reveals him as a man of sterling character and major achievement."

H. Teerink writes from Arnhem after his return from a short visit to England and Ireland. "We come back," he adds, "with a load of notes, which I am now working into shape."

We are pleased to receive the latest issue of *The New Rambler* (No. 16, Jan. 1950), which includes much valuable information about Johnsonian matters. Through this we first learned of the death of Robert Lynd, author of *Dr. Johnson and Company*, first published in 1927 and recently re-issued in the Penguin Series. Of importance is Robert Metzdorf's article on "The Second Sequel to *Rasselas*," which describes a rare work by Elizabeth Pope Whately called *The Second Part of the History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. A slim volume of 68 pages, it was twice printed — first in a collection in 1834, and then separately in 1835. In this continuation Imlac is discarded and his place taken by an Englishman named Everard. As Metzdorf puts it, "The sequel is written in good Johnsonian prose, and is a clever piece of writing. It has a certain importance as a tract, showing the philosophical assumptions of a soundly Christian position." Other discussions in this number which might be noted are some notes on "Dr. Johnson and the Cheshire Cheese" by W. E. Havart; and "Dr. Johnson and the Catholic Church" by J. L. Smith-Dampier.

Some of our readers may be interested in a little cardboard constructional model of the Johnson House in Gough Square. Made to scale on six small cards, it requires much patience and time to put together, but the result should delight all true Johnsonians. The set of cards can be secured from Micromodels, Ltd., 6 Racquet Court, Fleet St., London, E.C. 4. The price is 1/8.

L. F. Powell of Oxford gave the address at the annual memorial ceremony and wreath-laying on Dr. Johnson's grave in Westminster Abbey on Dec. 13. *The New Rambler* calls it "an inspiring brief address on Johnson's character and influence."

A. L. Reade (Blundellsands, Liverpool) writes regretfully that his article in *FLS* last June on Michael Johnson's early career has not brought him any fresh information, as he had hoped. But he adds that when he has time he hopes to follow up some of the clues there provided. The great "Gleaner" is still actively at work.

E. S. de Beer, whose letters are always a joy to receive, so packed are they with literary concerns, sends on much news which



we would like to pass on. In addition to putting the finishing touches on his Evelyn edition, preparing an article on Italian newspapers in the British Museum, and reading Restoration plays, he is compiling a list of accounts of Italy written or published between 1500 and 1600. He adds: "George Sampson has just died. Once, towards the end of the war, I think, he spoke to the Johnson Club on Johnson; about twenty minutes without faltering and with every sentence properly constructed. That must be a remarkable achievement. He had no notes. What he had to say was outstanding; I think one of the best occasions in the twenty years during which I have been a member of the Club."

From the Bishop of Stafford comes a letter concerning the necessary expensive repairs on the Lichfield Cathedral Spire. He adds: "I wonder if any of your friends, who are linked up through Johnsonian interests with Lichfield, would be prepared to send us a donation towards the financial responsibility which we have to meet. Any such donations received would be most gratefully appreciated by those connected with the Cathedral and also all those living in Lichfield who have learned to love this beautiful building."

### M.L.A. Discussion Groups

Plans are already being made for the next M.L.A. meeting, to be held in New York next Dec. As before, it will be possible to schedule semi-formal discussions on specific topics — arranged for members who really want to talk about special problems. We hope there may be several arranged for 18th-century topics. Remember that a petition must be signed by seven or more members, stating the topic and aim of the proposed conference, designating a discussion leader, and asking that a room be set aside for the group meeting. All petitions must be in by Oct. 1. No reading of papers will be allowed, but mimeographed reports or notes may be circulated in advance. If you have any topics suitable for such conferences, talk over the possibility with your friends and write at once to your editor. We will try to get things started.

### "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed"

Bonamy Dobrée (Leeds) writes:

No doubt Swift, in writing such poems as "A Beautiful Young

Nymph Going to Bed" was exorcising some devil, since he has too many poems similar in feeling to make us suppose anything else. Yet ought it not to be noted that such poems, particularly the one named, belong to a "kind," and that we find examples in Prior and other poets? A passage of the same sort occurs in *The Parson's Wedding* (c. 1639) Act IV, Sc. i. of Thomas Killigrew the elder, and refers to Lady Love—all who wishes to be young:

I peep'd once to see what she did before she went to bed: by this light, her Maids were dissecting her; and when they had done, they brought some of her to bed, and the rest they either pinn'd or hung up, and so she lay dismembered till Morning: in which time her Chamber was strew'd all over like an Anatomy school.

Maurice Johnson (Syracuse) further suggests that Dorset and Rochester must be mentioned alongside Swift's poems on women. "They are clearly in a tradition, though I do not see how it can be considered a 'kind.' Description of woman's false, hypocritic 'beauty' in the form of rouge, wigs, breast-plumpers, etc. is simply an age-old means to satire; there is an ancient heavily-painted prostitute in George Orwell's *1984* of last year, who is reminiscent of Swift's Nymph."

It must be remembered that there were all kinds of pictures of the lady's boudoir: witness (Evelyn's) *Mundus Muliebris: or the Ladies Dressing-Room Unlock'd, and Her Toilette Spread. In Burlesque.* (1690). But how prevalent were the nasty inside views of the Lady's Dressing Room? Was Swift following a recognizable convention throughout, as he was in his violent attacks on the sexual characteristics of the sectaries in *A Tale of a Tub*? How many other examples can we find?

## Research Workers in England

You may remember that in our last issue we asked for names and addresses of efficient professional research workers near the major English libraries, willing at regular rates to do minor investigations for American Scholars. So far we have had only one response. John Loftis sends in the name of Mrs. J. Cleeves, 2 Otley House, Woodstock, Oxfordshire. Loftis writes: "Mrs. Cleeves is herself a scholar, with a particular interest in the eighteenth century. She has written reviews and a few articles.



She knows research procedure and is thoroughly familiar with the Bodleian."

We hope you will send in other names, particularly of people able to do work at the British Museum, The Public Record Office, etc. Help us to build up a directory of available research workers everywhere.

### Recent Publications

A valuable bibliography and commentary is Mary Tom Osborne's (N. Texas St. Teachers C.) *Advice-to-a-Painter Poems 1633-1856*, just issued by the Univ. of Texas. With a Foreword by R. H. Griffith, it discusses the origins of the type, particularly the influence of Pusenello, and then provides an annotated finding list of poems of this genre. From Waller, Marvell, Prior, she traces the type all the way to Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Charles Dickens.

The latest issue of the Augustan Reprint Society is a special facsimile of Theobald's Preface to his edition of Shakespeare in 1734. Hugh Dick (U.C.L.A.) provides a useful Introduction.

American readers who may have had difficulty securing copies of Norman Ault's *New Light on Pope* may be glad to know that it can be secured from the British Book Centre, 122 E. 55th St., New York City.

Designed not for scholars but for those just discovering some interest in literature, Roger P. McCutcheon's *Eighteenth-Century English Literature* in the Home Univ. Library has been issued by the Oxford Univ. Press in New York. It is a sensible, up-to-date statement of the basic facts about the period, written very simply for the general reader.

George H. Tweney (1405 W. Saratoga Ave., Ferndale 20, Mich.) has issued a little 8 page pamphlet, reproducing and describing a letter of Mrs. Thrale to an undisclosed correspondent, dated June 15, 1782. Tweney's suggestion that Johnson was the recipient would appear to be improbable, at least from the evidence of his known letters at the time.

We have not heretofore called attention to the reprinting of portions of Johnson's translation of Father Lobo in *Portugese Voyages, 1498-1663*, edited by C. D. Ley for the Everyman's Library.

## A Calendar of British Taste, 1600-1800

E. F. Carritt has arranged a useful book for tracing currents of ideas of taste during the 17th and 18th centuries, with the title *A Calendar of British Taste from 1600-1800* (published by Routledge and Kegan Paul). William Appleton (Columbia) comments that while he found the selections from journals and letters interesting, he found the "advertisements and the extracts from auction sales the most original feature of the book. A triple index is invaluable in orienting the reader in a sea of references to places, persons, and things."

## Millennium and Utopia

The 18th century had no more difficult problem than that of reconciling the theory of progress as the law of Nature with the theory that man, in Adam, fell and could be saved only by divine intervention. In his recent book, *Millennium and Utopia* (U. of Calif. Press), Ernest Tuveson (Calif.) sees Thomas Burnet as the one who closed the door upon the older cyclical theory of history and raised aloft the credo of progress. Tuveson re-examines this utopian belief in progress and suggests that it comes from the old Jewish apocalyptic idea, as interpreted by the English theologians and philosophers. From Mede, More and Boyle, Burnet drew many of his ideas; in Edwards, Sherlock and Worthington the theme came full circle. Later, one of the most influential expressions of the millennialists was Edmund Law's *Considerations on the Theory of Religion* (1745) — a contradiction of the popular Augustan belief in a fixed, immutable and universal law of Nature, which went through seven editions within 40 years. Tuveson's challenging book has much to interest 18th-century scholars (there is no space in the *JNL* to do more than to suggest the nature of its contents). One section of special importance is an Appendix, where he discusses the effects of the idea of progress on literature and the creative imagination, showing how it led to the separation of the poet from his world and thus prepared the way for Romanticism.

## Recent Articles

For students of Alexander Pope there are: Rebecca Price Parkin, "Alexander Pope's Use of the Implied Dramatic Speaker," *College*



*English*, for Dec.; Mildred Riling, "'Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux,'" *N & Q*, Dec. 10, 1949, and a reply by Geoffrey Tillotson in the same periodical for Jan. 21, 1950; William Empson, "Wit in the Essay on Criticism," *Hudson Review* for Winter 1950. The most important recent article having to do with Swift is Ernest Tuveson's "Swift and the World-Makers" in *JHI* for Jan. 1950. H. Teerink has some suggestions about "Richard Sympson" in *N & Q* for Jan. 21.

The following have to do with various 18th-century figures: Robert A. Aubin, "Behind Steele's Satire on Undertakers," *PMLA* for Dec.; M. K. Joseph, "William Falconer," *SP*, Jan. 1950; A.D. McKillop, "Thomson and the Jail Committee," in the same issue of *SP*; Alice Brandenburg, "The Theme of *The Mysterious Mother* in *MLQ* for Dec.; Ambrose Heal; "The Personal Household Bills of Edward Gibbon," *N & Q*, Oct. 29; Ernest Mossner, "A MS Fragment of Hume's 'Treatise,' 1740," *N & Q* for Nov. 26; two articles by Francesco Cordasco, "Colonel Maclean and the Junius Controversy," *ELH* for Dec.; and "A Monody on the Death of Junius," *N & Q* for Jan. 7, 1950; Ernest Boll, "At Mrs. Lippincote's and Tristram Shandy," in *MLN* for Feb. 1950. An older article which we have previously failed to see is William Hubert Miller, "Mark Catesby, an Eighteenth Century Naturalist" in *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Geneological Mag.* for Jan. 1948.

Of more general interest are: Sir Charles Petrie, "Elections and Electioneering in the Eighteenth Century," *The English Review Mag.* for Sept. 1949; R. D. Havens, "Discontinuity in Literary Development: the Case of English Romanticism," *SP* for Jan. 1950; and numerous articles contained in a special issue of the *Historical Mag. of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, for Dec., given over to the topic "The Church in the Eighteenth Century" (this last reported to us by Rudolf Kirk).

Of Johnsonian interest is a note on "Johnson's aitches" in *Word Study* for Dec., commenting further on the vexing matter of the use of "h."; and A. D. Atkinson's continuation of "Notes on Johnson's 'Dictionary'" in *N & Q* for Jan. 21, 1950. From D. V. Hubble in Derby comes word of an article by Dr. Russell Brain in England entitled "Authors and Psychopaths" which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* for Dec. 24, 1949. This deals with the personalities of Donne, Swift, Boswell, Dickens, in addition to Johnson. So far we have not seen the article, but will comment further when we do.

At the last minute we have received another important article, R. S. Crane's "The Plot of 'Tom Jones'" in *The Journal of General Education* for Jan. 1950 (more of this in our next issue).

## Johnson and Language

Donald Greene (Univ. of Saskatchewan) writes:

"I was interested in the discussion (on page 9 of the June issue) of Johnson's notorious pronouncement on the letter *h*. No one is likely to dispute Mr. Mabbott's contention that, if Johnson meant only 'that *h* rarely begins any save the first syllable of an English *root*,' he was right; for we are assured by the philologists (e.g., Bloomfield, *Language*, 1933, p. 243) that all English roots are monosyllabic. Any attempt to redefine *root* so as to admit polysyllables in which the fact of the original compounding has become obscured is bound also to admit such exceptions to Johnson's rule as *behave* and, of course, *perhaps* ('seldom, perhaps never') in Johnson's offending statement itself.

"Anyway, I'm not sure that we should be too happy about the suggestion that, although Johnson was really right, he bowed to criticism and retracted a true statement. Johnson could indeed be wrong in his generalizations about the English language. '*C*,' he says, 'having no determinate sound, according to English orthography, never ends a word.' But in the *Dictionary* (4th edition) we find *arc*, *lac*, *orc* ('A sort of sea-fish') and *maniac*."

## A Note

From Jim Osborn, now at the Huntington Library working on Spence, comes word that the fine Johnsonian library of the late Albert B. Burney (mentioned on page 5) is to be sold at Sotheby's in April or May. This should provide a tempting opportunity for all Johnson collectors.